

Aspiring filmmaker has Fort Leavenworth roots

by Scott Thompson
Staff Writer

For the aspiring filmmaker, the name stands out like bold-faced print: Steven Spielberg.

His association with a new FOX television show called "On the Lot" caught the attention of Amy McClung late last year.

Amy, a sophomore at the University of Kansas, is a filmmaker with a portfolio of short films, music videos and a feature film under her belt. The opportunity to earn a \$1 million development deal at DreamWorks was too big to pass up.

Amy's five-minute submission for the competition, a short film titled "Drift," apparently caught the attention of the show's producers. Out of 12,000 submissions, Amy's was one of 200 chosen for the first cut.

"On the Lot," produced by Spielberg and Mark Burnett of "Survivor" fame, premiered May 22. The pool of competitors was whittled to 50 last week and Amy missed the cut, but the experience was one that she won't soon forget.

"Winning would be awesome, but sometimes losing can teach you so much more about yourself," she said. "This isn't something that I'm going to take away and never try out again. If anything, it inspires me to try even harder to see how far I can make it in the future."

She called it an adventure, one that started in February with her film submission.

Amy interviewed with a casting producer from Mark Burnett Productions March 8 in Chicago and was given seven days to create a 60-second trailer for the short film she submitted.

"They wanted to see if we could put something together in a week under time constraints," said Amy, whose father works at the National Simulation Center. "And on top of that we're going to give you all this paperwork we want you to fill out."

The paperwork was just the start. Shortly thereafter, word came that the show's producers wanted an entirely new short film for submission. They gave competitors seven days to write, produce, film and edit another entirely new short film.

Amy was still in school at the time, making things even more difficult.

"Staying on top of my schoolwork and trying to put



Submitted photo

Student and filmmaker Amy McClung made the first cut to appear on a new Fox television show, "On the Lot," produced by Steven Spielberg and Mark Burnett.

tions of an older woman.

"You find out in the end that it's not the boy and woman that are coming together, it's the dogs," Amy said.

The short was filmed on Fort Leavenworth, with locations that included Main Parade and an area by Sherman Army Airfield. It starred the family's two Shetland sheepdogs and Amy's brother, Joe.

"I put my brother in pretty much all of my projects," Amy said.

(the film) together in time was difficult, but actually I love the way it turned out," Amy said. "Even though I was under a little bit of pressure I really liked the outcome."

Producers gave her three taglines to choose from and Amy chose "finding love" as hers. The fruit of Amy's seven days of labor was "Puppy Love," a short film depicting a young boy who uses his dog to win the affec-

In fact, one might say Amy's filmmaking is somewhat of a family business. She gets consistent help from her mother, Tracy, with casting, finding locations and other miscellaneous duties.

"We really enjoy working together and I always look at it as a team effort, although she's the brains and I'm just kind of the lackey," Tracy joked.

The idea for "Puppy Love" was born from a brainstorming session with Amy, Tracy and Joe — a common means for developing story ideas.

Amy's mother also played a prominent role in the production of another film, one that Amy directed and edited called "Change of Life." The independent feature film, Amy's first, premiered at the Tivoli Theatre in Kansas City, Mo., in December 2006. Amy is currently in search of a distributor for the independent feature, which was produced by Agent Provocateur Films. The film crew consisted of Amy, her mother Tracy and the producer of the film.

Even though she didn't make the final cut for "On the Lot," Amy said she took something away from the competition and even though she didn't make it to the finals, it gave her a sense of what the business is like.

She felt her work was worthy, but understands the nature of the business.

"Maybe I just didn't have the personality they were looking for. I think it was more about image than talent," Amy said.

Tracy also enjoyed the experience and said that, although her daughter won't be moving on, the show is worth watching.

"I was afraid it was going to turn out to be another reality show filled with drama, but after (the May 28) show, it was more like 'American Idol,' where you have very talented people," Tracy said. "I think Amy would have been great, but the people that they did choose had definite talent."

The future has more film work in store for Amy. This summer she'll travel to Wisconsin to film a live music concert and is currently looking for bands and artists who want to immortalize their music on film. It's the direction Amy would like to see her career take — directing music videos.

To view Amy's work, log on to www.amymcclung.com.